



COMPANY COMMENT

The Honourable Company of Freemen of the
City of London of North America
www.freemenlondon.org

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03/09/2004

From the Master

How time flies when you are having fun!!!

Here we are 3 months into my year as your Master, and I am delighted to say that everything is going according to expectations.

By now you should have received your 25th Anniversary edition of Company Comment for which our thanks go to our Editor and Past Master Peter Leach and his team. This is a great keepsake for all our members and regular recipients of Company Comment and especially those who attended the Anniversary Dinner. Copies were mailed to all members on record and to all of the Livery Companies and City Guilds. We have undertaken a second print to satisfy requests for copies from the City and to assist in our on-going membership drive!! The responses, especially from the Livery Companies and City Guilds, have been most gratifying in terms of the congratulatory messages received and the friendships and ties we have established. Please let Peter know if you didn't receive your copy and he will send another to you, but please don't ask for duplicates – our reprint doesn't allow for such numbers.

Your events committee has been very busy and the dust had hardly settled after the Dinner before we were at Past Master Hugh Oddie's home for the annual "Meet the Master" reception that attracted a sizeable turnout on a sunny May evening. Hugh opened his home and his cellar to enable us to enjoy good food and wines.

In June, we returned to the Toronto Board of Trade Country Club for the ever popular Sunday Brunch. Twenty-six members and guests enjoyed the picturesque surroundings and a delightful buffet lunch.

Within days, we were back in the City for the annual "Last Night of the Proms" at Roy Thomson Hall – always a sold-out event.

Host Geoffrey Mayo has been inundated with requests for a repeat in 2005.

Talking of Geoffrey & Elaine Mayo, we were again fortunate to be invited back to their magnificent country home at Port Severn. This is always popular with the members who enjoy lunch in beautiful surroundings and for some the chance to spend time afloat with "Commodore" Mayo on his boat. Thanks to Elaine & Geoffrey for hosting another delightful day

By the time you receive this, we will be planning for our evening reception at the Toronto Cricket Club where we hope to learn more of the wonderful game of cricket while enjoying great food and imbibing responsibly. Maybe it will be the last reminder of this atypical summer?

We still hope to meet up with our members in the New York area through a joint meeting with the St. George's Society of New York.

David Moorcroft, our Events Chairman has plans to take us to the year-end and beyond. See the section on Upcoming Events.

Membership is thriving with six new applications being endorsed at the July meeting of the Court. We are on target to grow the membership by 25 (one for each of the 25 years since our formation) but to achieve this we need your support. Past Master Neil Purcell, Membership Chair, would be delighted to hear from you with names of family or friends with an interest in the City of London, its history and the Freedom.

As I have said before, I welcome your suggestions and advice, positive or not, through the telephone, mail or Email.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can in the months to come.

John S. Smith

Master

Company Profile – The Worshipful Company of Mercers

In this issue, we will take a look at the very first of the Great Twelve Companies. The Worshipful Company of Mercers is the first in the order of precedence, although they are not necessarily the first to have existed. The reason that an order of precedence was necessary is the arguments that echoed around the city in the 12th and 13th centuries and continued thereafter until a final resolution in 1515 in the reign of Henry VIII. The principles on which that order of precedence were established are not very evident but the order is generally accepted today. Being number one does, of course, make the Mercers the most prestigious of the Livery Companies.

The following history is necessarily a very short summary of nearly 1000 years of the Mercers' Company. The Company has one of the most complete archives of any of the London Livery Companies with the Acts of Court going back to 1453, the Company's Accounts for 1442, the Register of Members from 1348, the Register of Apprentices from 1619 to 1888 (when the last Apprentices were bound) and Minutes of the Joint Grand Gresham Committee from 1596.

A Very Brief History

The origin of the Company is lost in history, but in 1190 the Mercers Guild formed an association with the Hospital of St. Thomas of Acon, a brotherhood of the Crusader Knights who had settled in a certain section of the City of London as the Templars did in Fleet Street. The Guild became patrons of the Hospital and its Church. The site of the Guild's Hall had been the home of the father of Thomas à Becket. Documents record that Thomas was born in this home, and the Hospital had been built there by the Archbishop's sister and her husband, Theobald Helles, in his memory. During the Reformation, the monks of St. Thomas were forced to surrender their rights to the King, but the Mercers, were fortunate in having one of the powerful Gresham's as a friend of the King and through him acquired the Hospital and its Church.

The term 'Mercer' is derived from the Latin 'merx' meaning merchandise and the French for merchant. In ancient times, mercery involved the export of woolen materials and the import of luxury fabrics and was the centre of commercial activity in the City and was largely responsible for the growth of international trade.

The Company was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1394. Due to its prestigious position, there are few reports of the Livery and Apprentices being involved in the disputes and rivalries that plagued London in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Company had become especially prominent for their wealth in the 12th and 13th centuries, and they were known for their extravagance. One legend records that the Mayor during the time of Henry V, a Mercer, impressed the King and Queen by feeding a cedarwood fire with £60,000 of the King's bonds to show true extravagance, but no such loss is actually shown in the financial records of the Company.

In addition to its domestic trade base and influence, the Mercers and some other trading companies were quick to take advantage of foreign trade opportunities. They fitted out fleets of merchant ships to compete with foreign trading organizations and Royal fleets. Amongst the first of these enterprises was the creation of the Merchant Adventurers. This was separately incorporated by the Royal Charter of Edward IV. It traded all over Denmark and Germany, and received much acclamation in Dutch cities due to the trade and wealth that it brought to them. The Merchant Adventurers eventually broke away from the Mercers' Company and established their base in Bristol. Other trading Companies were created out of the Mercers' and other trading companies over time. These include the Muscovite Company; the Turkey Company; the Royal African Company; the Merchants of Spain; the French Merchants of Virginia; the South Seas Company; the East India Company; and, most notably for North American Freeman, the Hudson Bay Company.

As one would expect of traders, the Mercers were significantly involved in the "Plantations of Ulster" and later in the "Plantations of Virginia". Both exploits were initially financial disasters for the Companies involved. In Ulster, the Companies were just starting to see a return on their investments when the landlords were hit with the 1641 rebellion. However, unlike the settlements in Virginia, the Ulster settlements were eventually successful and the Companies were able to extract themselves by way of the Irish Land Purchase Acts in the 19th century.

It is not well known that 10 of the men-o-war that were part of the British fleet at the time of the Spanish Armada belonged to the Merchant Adventurers and the entire cost of these ships were paid for by the City of London.

Famous Liverymen

Richard Whittington is probably the most famous member of the Mercers' Company. While Dick Whittington is immortalized in the famous pantomime that celebrates the success and power of a wanderer coming to London, the real Richard Whittington was born in the 1350's in Pauntley, Gloucestershire, the youngest son of a wealthy merchant and landowner. There is a separate article on Richard Whittington (or Whytyngdone) later in this issue.

The second Mercer of note is Sir Thomas Gresham. Sir Thomas was an extremely successful trading mercer, entrepreneur, skilled financier and Royal Agent. Born about 1518/1519 in Milk Lane, he was the second son of Sir Richard Gresham who was also a successful mercer. Thomas attended Gonville College, Cambridge and was apprenticed to his uncle Sir John Gresham. He was admitted to the Worshipful Company in 1543. He became the Royal Agent in the Netherlands and was knighted himself in 1559 for his services to Queen Elizabeth I.

With the insights of his Dutch experience, he became determined to build an Exchange in the City of London as a focal point for all business dealings, and he successfully garnered the support of the Mercers' Company and the City of London who provided the site. Gresham himself was responsible for the building and this was deeded to the City and the Mercers' Company on the death of himself and his wife. This first Exchange was an ambitious and successful project and it was opened in 1570. This single act is one of the key determining events that established the City of London as a world trading centre.

Like so many of the early great buildings of the City, the Exchange was a victim of the Great Fire of 1666, but when rebuilt, it again suffered a devastating fire in 1838. The third and present Exchange was designed by Sir William Tite and opened in 1844.

Sir Thomas died in 1579 and was buried in St. Helen's Bishopgate. Lady Ann Gresham lived on until 1596. The revenue from the Exchange was also deeded so that it had to be used to support an educational establishment that would provide learned free lectures for the people of the City and this is Gresham College. The Corporation and the Mercers have jointly administered the Royal Exchange and Gresham College since 1596.

Symbol and Coat of Arms

The Mercers' Maiden is the symbol and the centre of the Coat of Arms of the Worshipful Company of Mercers. She first appeared on the seal in 1425. The reason for the adoption of this emblem is unknown and the emblem has changed over time as the final and possibly original image was not established as the Coat of Arms until 1911.

The Mercers' Hall

From the 14th century, the Mercers' held their meetings in the Hospital of St. Thomas. Later, the Hospital sold the Company a plot of land adjoining the Monastic Church of the Hospital. The Company built a small chapel with the first Hall above it, making it the only Company to have its own chapel.

After the dissolution of the Hospital by Henry VIII in 1538, the Company bought all the Monastery and Hospital buildings, later returning the Hospital buildings to the reformed Hospital.

The original Hall was destroyed in the Great Fire, and was rebuilt to a design of Edward Jarman and John Oliver. It reopened in 1676, and during the next 265 years, served as the centre of the affairs of the Company. It underwent major refurbishment between 1877 and 1881 when the frontage was remodeled to a design of George Barnes Williams and the interior was refurbished to the design of John Gregory Crace. This hall was totally destroyed during the Blitz of London on 10/11 May 1941.

The third hall was built between 1954 and 1958. The architect was E. Noel Clifton and built by Ashby and Homer Ltd. This new hall continues to include a chapel.

Education

As is the case with many of the Livery Companies especially the 12 Great Companies, the Mercers' played and continue to play a significant role in education. The Mercers' appear to have been the first Company with a Charter that stipulated the foundation of a Grammar School in the City. This requirement was made in 1444 and resulted in the foundation of such a school. By 1542, this became the Mercers' School and remained the responsibility of the Mercers' Company until 1959 when it was closed. Dean Colet (the Dean of St. Paul Cathedral) founded St. Paul's School in 1510, and it was handed over to the Mercers' Company a little later for its maintenance. St. Paul's School is one of many that owe their existence to the generosity of the Livery Companies. While the Company is no longer responsible for the administration of these schools, the Mercers' Education Trust Fund continues to make grants to individual students.

In 1878, the Mercers' together with 15 other Livery Companies founded the City and Guilds of London Institute. This was initially located in the Mercers' Hall in 1880 and it still receives an annual Charitable Grant from the Mercers' Charitable Foundation.

Material for this article was assembled from information on the website of the Worshipful Company of Mercers and Sir Ernest Pooley's "The Guilds of the City of London", published by William Collins of London in 1945

The Real "Dick" Whittington

The legendary and pantomime story of Dick Whittington is almost all untrue. The first myth to dispel is that he was a penniless boy with his worldly goods wrapped up in a handkerchief. In addition, if he had ever been returning home passing over Highgate Hill when he heard the Bow Bells calling him to turn again, he was going the wrong way. Also records make no mention of any cat. In fact, he wasn't even Whittington, he was "Whytyngdone". But, lets not be pedantic and continue to use the current spelling of his family name.

He was born in Gloucestershire and when he arrived in London, he already had at least one job and possibly two. He probably started work bound as an apprentice to John Fitzwarren, a wealthy mercer. Fitzwarren was the most successful mercer of the age, amassing a fortune dealing in luxury goods. He supplied many of the Courtiers of Richard II. He was rich enough to make substantial loans to the King and followed this with a recorded number of 51 loans to Henry IV, totalling more than £30,000. Dick became the collector of the wool tax so Fitzwarren was always sure of getting his money back.

Dick married Alice Fitzwarren, became an Alderman and Master of the Mercers' Company. In 1397, on the death of the Lord Mayor Adam Bamme, Sheriff Whittington assumed that office. He served two more terms as Lord Mayor in 1406 and 1419.

There is no documentary evidence of his knighthood but it is clear that he did everything that could have been done to have earned it. He lent Henry V the funds for his military campaign in France that ended with the great victory at Agincourt. It was Henry V that granted the Lord Mayor the privilege of sitting at the right hand of the Monarch, a practice that is believed to have been started by the King precisely at that time.

He was also a great public builder. One of his achievements was the construction in 1419 of public toilets with 60 flush stalls for men and another 60 for women.

Dick and Alice had no children, and when Dick died in 1423, he left his great fortune to the City. One of his bequests was money to rebuild St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

This article was written primarily from the Lord Mayor's Show Guide 1999 published by Haymarket Customer Magazines Ltd 1999, with additions from the website of the Worshipful Company of Mercers

Events Report

Reception with the Globe and Mail – Royal Bank Plaza on 7th April 2004

More than 70 Company members and their guests attended a special evening with senior management and editorial staff from the Globe and Mail newspaper. The evening was hosted by RBC Financial Group at their beautiful reception area on the 40th floor of Royal Bank Plaza, overlooking Lake Ontario.

The guests from the Globe and Mail included Phillip Crawley, Publisher and CEO; Giles Gherson, Report On Business Editor; Eric Reguly, business columnist; Andy Willis, financial markets columnist; and Sinclair Stewart, banking reporter. Last year's Master, Geoffrey Mayo, introduced Mr. Crawley who gave an entertaining talk on the sometimes fragile state of press freedoms, punctuated with some personal recollections of his encounters with freemen in Newcastle and London, England.

David Moorcroft, Events Chairman and Court Warden, thanked Mr. Crawley and his colleagues from the Globe and Mail, and concluded with a few remarks about the history of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the City of London of North America and its work in North America.

Contributed by David Moorcroft, Events Chairman and Court Warden

Board of Trade Summer Brunch – Board of Trade Country Club, Woodbridge on 13th June 2004

26 Members and their guests attended the annual summer brunch at the Toronto Board of Trade's Country Club. As usual the food and surroundings were outstanding and the gardens looked magnificent. As many of the Company's events are quite formal, it is a real pleasure to be able to take a leisurely lunch and have the time to have broad ranging conversations with other Freemen and their guests. This year again allowed members to have interesting conversation in a congenial atmosphere.

Contributed by Sylvia Davis, Court Warden

Last Night at the Proms – Roy Thompson Hall, Toronto on 16th June 2004

12 members and guests attended a delightful evening listening and singing along to the Last Night at the Proms concert with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at the Roy Thompson Hall. The group met at the "Elephant and Castle" for food and drinks first. The British guest conductor invited audience participation and all were in good voice for the songs, especially "Land of Hope and Glory". The event, which was orchestrated by Geoffrey Mayo, the Immediate Past Master, was so successful with those attending that it was agreed to repeat this event next year. The Court is planning to make it an annual event, and hopes to get an even greater discount on the tickets with an increase in the numbers. So why not plan to attend next year and enjoy a wonderful evening listening and singing along to all those old British favorites?

Contributed by Sylvia Davis, Court Warden

Day at the Country Home of Immediate Past Master Geoffrey Mayo – Port Severn on 15th August 2004

On August 15, 2004, members and their guests had the opportunity to enjoy good food, good company and breathtaking views at the 2nd annual BBQ event held in Port Severn at the Immediate Past Master's country home.

Elaine and Geoffrey Mayo were once again the perfect hosts. The weather helped by playing its part in producing idyllic 25 degree temperatures with a cloudless sky and plenty of sunshine.

In attendance were the Master, several Court Wardens as well as plenty of members and guests old and new, making for a successful turnout yet again. As he did last year, Geoffrey took many of his visitors on a short cruise, and a few photographs can be seen on the Company's website.

Thank you Elaine and Geoffrey for giving all those in attendance the opportunity to enjoy their haven.

Contributed by Agnes Chaitas, Court Warden

Upcoming Events**Reception and Lecture – The Venerable Game of Cricket**

Location Toronto Cricket, Skating and Curling Club
 Date and Time Wednesday, 15th September 2004 at 7:00pm
 Dress Informal
 Price \$45.00 per person

Reception and Tour – Meet the Speaker of the House

Location Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto
 Date and Time Wednesday, 6th October 2004 at 5:30 pm
 Dress Informal/Casual
 Price probably \$35.00 per person

Charity Reception and Beer Tasting – What's brewing in the Distillery District

Location Toronto's Distillery District
 Date and Time TBA
 Dress Casual
 Price TBA

New York Lunch – Freeman Visit the Big Apple**Christmas Lunch with the St. George's Society of New York**

Location Yale Club, New York City
 Date and Time Saturday 11th December 2004 at 12:00 noon
 Dress Informal
 Price TBA

New Members of the Honourable Company**Anthony David Baker**

Tony immigrated to Canada from the UK in 1976. His career here has included management and marketing roles and consulting assignments in the aerospace, electronics, telecom, computer, and software industries. He has degrees in Electronics and Computer Science and completed a diploma in Economics and Financial Management. He is a Certified Management Consultant. In 1991, he started Market Access Worldwide, a company that assists client corporations develop their international business, especially for the Canadian, US and European markets.

He teaches International Trade Research, International Marketing, Logistics, Distribution, and International Trade Management courses at Centennial College and for the Forum for International Trade Training.

Tony is a director of the British Canadian Chamber of Trade and Commerce where he is currently Chair of the Trade and Investment Committee. He is also an active member of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Toronto.

He has known and loved London since his childhood and he continues to enjoy his visits there. Becoming a Member of the Honourable Company will further help his social and business links with London and Europe, as well as strengthening his knowledge of the City heritage represented in the Livery Companies and Guilds.

Christina B. Charles

Christina Charles is the daughter of our Honorary Treasurer, Dr. Michael Charles and his wife Barbara. She was born in Edmonton in 1963, educated at Lawrence Park Collegiate and the University of Toronto. She has a B.Sc in Environmental Toxicology and an M.H.Sc in Occupational Health and safety.

Since graduation she has pursued a career in occupational health and safety, and in resource management in De Havilland Aircraft, the Ford Motor Company, Bombardier and ShawCor.

Christina is also an accomplished sportswoman and is a licensed instructor for both tennis and skiing. Also, she will soon be completing a diploma in photography from Ryerson University.

Christina was introduced to the Honourable Company by her father, and enjoys the company of these new friends, the traditions fostered by the organization and she hopes to become a Freeman soon.

Richard E. Lax

Richard was born and raised in Toronto, and apart from schooling and travel, has lived there his entire life. His formal education includes a BA from the University of Western Ontario, and an MBA from York University (now the Schulich School of Management). Richard has been an Investment Advisor for six years, and currently works at Dundee Securities, specializing in Wealth Management and Wealth Accumulation strategies.

He has been attending Freeman events for some time as a guest of Neil Purcell, and has recently decided to join the Freeman as a result of the great people he has met.

Richard is married to Stacey and has a one-year-old daughter, Mya.

Livia Purcell

Livia was born and raised in Budapest, Hungary and was attending Eötvös Loránd University when she left because of the 1956 revolution, arriving in Canada in November.

Livia worked for Neil Purcell at CIBC and they got married just before Neil was transferred to New York City in 1974.

Livia worked many years in banking in Canada and the United States including the Imperial Bank of Canada and CIBC in Toronto, Bankers Trust in New York City, Republic National Bank in Dallas, California Canadian Bank in San Francisco and the Rocky Mountain Bank Note Company in Denver. She also worked for Founders Title Company in San Francisco prior to moving back to Canada in 1987 with Neil. They purchased a working interest in a

business and tax consulting firm “Tri-Counsel” and both remain active

Livia is an animal lover and is involved in many animal welfare organizations, in addition to having served for the last seven years as Treasurer of Barrie “Out of the Cold”, an organization providing food and shelter for the homeless during the winter months.

A loyal supporter of the Honourable Company for many years, she has attended many events with Neil, especially during his time on the Court and as Master in 2001-2002. She has also attended many Freeman and Livery events in London and has now decided it is time she should become a member of the Honourable Company and to become a Freeman of the City.

Brian Purcell

Brian is the son of Neil Purcell, Past Master and of Livia. He was born and raised in Toronto, but has also lived in the US in California and Colorado.

He graduated from McMaster University with a degree in Political Science. However, following graduation he got involved in the computer industry, and has worked for a number of years for IBM Canada in their Government Industry Group.

He is married to Heather and they have 2 small children, Megan and Meredith. Brian is an avid hockey player and plays hockey all year round. He is also a dedicated golfer having inherited some of the skills and talents of his Grandfather who was a golf professional in England and Canada for over 60 years. Brian is a sailor and all around outdoor sports enthusiast. He has attended and brought many guests to Honourable Company events over the last few years and decided it was time to become a member – following in the footsteps of his father

To come in the next issue

Delays in the receipt of biographical information have meant that the short profile of two other new members will be included in the next issue of Company Comment. These new members are:

Karim Kanji, and
William George Whittaker

Errata and omissions in the 25th Anniversary Issue

The Editor wishes to apologize for two errors and an omission in the 25th Anniversary Issue of the Company Comment.

The errors occurred in the captions of two photographs: on the inside front cover bottom right, The Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Gary Burrows is shown in the company of Patricia Kemp; on page 11 in the centre, John Smith is in the company of Eileen Green, a guest of John and Sally Smith. Sincere apologies go to Gary and Sarah Burrows, Patricia and Past Master Tony Kemp and to Eileen and Sally and John Smith for these errors.

The omission occurred in the last paragraph of the History of the Honourable Company, The “Teenage” Years on page 6. The first luncheon of the 20th Anniversary Visit to London in November 1999 was generously provided by the Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers, and hosted by their Master with Godfrey Jacobs, Past Master of both the Painter-Stainers and this Honourable Company saying grace. The meal, like so many of those on this visit was memorable with Rosettes of Smoked Salmon served with Macon Lugny les Genièvres, 1997, Noisettes of English Lamb served with Côtes du Rhône Jaboulet Aine 1997, followed by Deep Apple and Blackcurrant Pie served with Croft Late Bottled Port. My apologies for missing this memorable event in the list of the key activities of this visit.

Communications with your Company

Honorary Clerk

Most matters concerning the Honourable Company (except membership) should be addressed to the Honorary Clerk.

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Membership Secretary

For membership, the main point of contact with the Honourable Company is through the Membership Secretary. Information about membership is also available on the Honourable Company's website: www.freemenlondon.org.

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West Coast Chapter:

This position is currently unfilled. Anyone who would like to volunteer should contact the Clerk for information.

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Finding Information about the Honourable Company

The Honourable Company has a substantial website that includes information about the organization, its activities including photographs, membership requirements and application forms and an archive of issues of Company Comment since 2001.

This site can be found at www.freemenlondon.org.

Finding Information about the City of London and the Livery Companies and Guilds

The City of London has a excellent website covering almost all aspects of life in the City. This can be found at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

In the Leisure & Heritage section of this site, there is a listing of all the Livery Companies and Guilds and links to the websites of all the Companies that have there own sites. This list can be found at :

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/leisure_heritage/livery/

At present, 82 of the 105 Livery Companies, 2 of 4 Companies without Livery and 3 of 3 Guilds have websites. These can be accessed by links from this webpage or by a search with any one of the major search engines. The main contact addresses for all the Companies and Guilds are also provided.

In addition there is a section on the Freedom, which includes all the information about application, eligibility and benefits, as well as a brief history. This can be found at:

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/leisure_heritage/freedom_of_city/

The website for the Guild of Freemen of the City of London is under construction. This Guild is not part of the Trade Companies and Guilds of the City, but is an organization that provides Freemen, who are not associated with these Companies to share in the Freedom together with others who are members of Companies and Guilds. There are more than 3000 Freemen who are members of the Guild.

The Honourable Company has a special relationship with the Guild of Freemen that provide reciprocal event attendance rights to each other's members. Anyone want to take advantage of this arrangements should contact the Clerk, Gail Moorcroft or the Editor of Company Comment, Peter Leach

